

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001970

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR D, SA, SA/INS, EUR/NB, INR/NESA; NSC FOR
1E. MILLARD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11-14-13

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINS PTER MOPS PINR CE NO LTTE

SUBJECT: In meeting with Ambassador, Sri Lankan Chief
of Defense Staff underscores support for peace process

Refs: Colombo 1963, and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

11. (C) The Ambassador paid a call November 4 on the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), Lieutenant General Lionel Balagalle. During the hour-long discussion, the Ambassador reiterated to LTG Balagalle our happiness with the restraint shown by the Sri Lankan military during the past twenty months in general and throughout the events of the last two weeks in particular. The Ambassador stressed the point that we allowed our military-to-military exercises and programs to continue last week specifically owing to the responsibility and stability shown by the armed forces. LTG Balagalle thanked the Ambassador for the confidence that the U.S. places in Sri Lanka and gave his highest assurances that the military would go forward with the peace process, would uphold the rule of law, and would continue to work to build stability in Sri Lanka.

12. (C) In addition to the central themes of military professionalism and restraint, LTG Balagalle touched on several other themes relevant to the security situation. LTG Balagalle stated that the Sri Lankan government and military were to a large extent responsible for the events leading up to the 1983 riots and subsequent 20 years of civil war. LTG Balagalle agreed with the Ambassador that the first step to solving a crisis situation is to accept responsibility for one's own part in its creation. In this regard, he vowed to continue the military's support of the peace process, but thanked the U.S. for its efforts in helping the Sri Lankan military improve. The military must be strong, he said, to prevent the LTTE from believing it has another option than negotiating peace.

13. (C) Interestingly, LTG Balagalle revealed that for the past twenty months of serving under a cohabitation government, he and the other service commanders as well as the Commandant of the Special Task Force and the Inspector General of Police have followed a self-imposed policy of non-partisan discipline. He said they had agreed not to pass criticisms made by one side to the other, not to reveal criticisms to the press, and to continue to follow the rule of law. Balagalle commented that if the President had imposed a state of emergency, he had told the Services that they would not change their behavior and would act as if there were not an emergency. For example, if told to arrest someone, they would hand that person unilaterally to the police to be handled under the normal justice system.

14. (C) COMMENT: Balagalle clearly understood the point about the need for the armed forces to continue to act with restraint while the civilians sort out the political process. His comment on how the military would act during an emergency was tantamount to saying that he would try to avoid letting the President use the military for political purposes. END COMMENT.

15. (U) Minimize considered.

LUNSTEAD